

NEWS

The International Centre for Chinese Heritage and Archaeology (ICCHA): After a Decade of Success

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The International Centre for Chinese Heritage and Archaeology (ICCHA) is a centre formed jointly by the UCL Institute of Archaeology and the Peking University School of Archaeology and Museology, and launched in Beijing on 15th December 2003. It was very much an initiative promoted by the then Institute director Peter Ucko, who continued to run the ICCHA after his retirement from UCL, until 2007. Since its beginnings the ICCHA has fostered links between the UK's largest archaeology department and the oldest and most prestigious university department of archaeology in China. It aims to enhance communication both ways, about Chinese archaeology and heritage issues for a UK audience, and about world archaeology and archaeological method and theory in the West for the Chinese archaeological community. The ICCHA fosters important joint research, organises significant international academic conferences, promotes interest in Chinese archaeology and heritage in London through its regular seminar series '*China Night*' at the Institute of Archaeology, and facilitates scholarly exchanges, at the level of research students, post-doctoral researchers, and academic staff. For further information see www.ucl.ac.uk/iccha.

In the first years, young post-doctoral researchers who later joined Peking University staff, came to London on visiting fellowships (supported by the Chinese Scholarship Council, but hosted by the ICCHA). These led to joint research between UCL staff and Peking University staff, and helped to build new methodological capacity at Peking University in areas of archaeology that were then emerging in China. In 2004, the ICCHA hosted Dr Ling Qin, specifically to undertake advanced training in archaeobotany and archaeobotanical teaching. She now runs the archaeobotanical laboratory at Peking University, opened in 2008, and supervises students from undergraduate to doctoral working on Chinese archaeobotanical projects. She also began collaboration with UCL's Dorian Fuller on the study of early rice cultivation focused on the site of Tianluoshan, which led to significant international published output (Fuller et al 2009), and the major NERC-funded Early Rice project (Fuller and Weisskopf 2011). The Peking University archaeobotany team remains a key partner in the study of early farming and crop domestication (see Fuller et al 'Comparing Pathways to Agriculture', this volume). Recent collaborations between UCL and Peking University have begun in Yunnan, Guangdong and Inner Mongolia to expand the understanding of early farming right across China.

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A second post-doctoral visitor from Peking University was Dr Hai Zhang, who has since developed teaching and research in geographic information system (GIS) and computer modelling in archaeology in Beijing. His time in London led to collaborations in the application of geostatistics to archaeobotanical data and settlement patterns (Zhang et al 2010) and to a sacred Neolithic landscape in China (Zhang et al 2013).

The ICCHA has also fostered joint projects with multiple partners, both in China and the U.K., such as ongoing research on the logistics of the terracotta warrior army, now a flagship project of the British Academy. This project draws on archaeological material science and GIS expertise at UCL together with a range of expertise in China (see Martinon-Torres et al 2011; 2014)

International Conferences

In order to facilitate international communication about archaeology, the ICCHA organises an international conference every few years to bring together Chinese and international scholars. These conferences are held in China (three times in Beijing, once in Baoji) where presentations are in either Chinese or English with simultaneous translation. The first such conference was spearheaded by Peter Ucko on the subject of archaeological field training, held in April 2006. This led to a published volume, *From Concepts of the Past to Practical Strategies* (Ucko et al 2008). The second conference was held in November 2008 on the theme of 'Sharing Archaeology,' with a focus on heritage and communication. It has also now been published (Stone and Zhao 2014). A third conference, in November 2011, was held in Baoji, Shaanxi, famous for its archaeological bronzes, on the subject of the 'Emergence of Bronze Age Societies' which drew together comparisons from right across Eurasia (Rehren et al., forthcoming).

Most recently, we held our fourth ICCHA conference at Peking University in April (5–8 April 2015), on the theme of 'Dialogue of Civilizations: Comparing Multiple Centres of

Early Civilizations of the World' (**Fig. 1**). This was sponsored jointly by the National geographic society, as their 3rd annual *Dialogue of Civilizations*, and by Peking University, and the Chinese State Administration of Cultural Heritage. The conference opening ceremony coincided with the opening of an exhibition on the Liangzhu culture, famous for its magnificent jades, 'Power in Things,' at the Sackler Museum of Peking University. The timing was also opportune as Chinese scholars had just completed 15 years of dedicated funding and research on various topics within the broad theme of 'the origins of Chinese Civilization.' In addition to hearing astounding updates on archaeological findings from our Chinese colleagues, we brought scholars of the Indus, Nile, Mesopotamia and Maya regions from around the world and from UCL (both the Institute of Archaeology and the UCL Centre for Research into the Dynamics of Civilisation) into an intriguing discussion of what constituted an early civilization and how we can uncover this archaeologically.

Chinese Archaeology in London

The regular evening seminars at UCL ('China Nights') focus on aspects of Chinese archaeology and heritage, and are held roughly four times each academic term. They provide opportunities for presenting new research carried out at the Institute, to invite speakers from across the U.K. who are engaged with Chinese archaeology or heritage, or for presentations by our colleagues from China when they come to London. The fruitful informal discussions and receptions after the seminars provide a meeting point for students and researchers of the Chinese past. In October 2014, in honour of 10 years of the ICCHA, we hosted a special 10th anniversary lecture, presented by Professor Dame Jessica Rawson (University of Oxford) on 'Gold and Iron: China's relations with the Steppe in the First Millennium BC', which inspired a theatre full of staff and students.

Over the past decade it is noticeable that the numbers of Chinese students studying at



Figure 1: International engagement at our most recent conference, ‘Dialogue of Civilizations’. Photo: ICCHA.

the Institute of Archaeology have increased, especially at the MA and PhD level. While this is not directly due to the ICCHA, it has certainly raised the profile of Chinese archaeology within UCL, and UCL within the international pool of universities where one can pursue Chinese archaeology. For a number of years this was directly aided by Kwok Foundation Scholarships which enabled mainland Chinese students to study in the U.K., in almost every case at UCL, and this led to about a dozen PhDs by Chinese students, most often focused on areas where UCL has particular methodological strength, such as Archaeometallurgy, Zooarchaeology, Archaeobotany and Cultural Heritage Management. The ICCHA also continues to help to host visiting scholars and visiting research students, some supported by the Chinese Scholarship Council, but some by funding from other sources such as Leverhulme Visiting Professor, Dr Xiaoyan Yang, over the 2014–15 year.

It should also be noted that when the ICCHA began, there were no staff members at UCL with expertise in Chinese archaeology, and few Institute of Archaeology staff had any active research there. Now we have

a full-time lecturer in Chinese archaeology (Dr Yijie Zhuang, since 2013), numerous staff and research students working on Chinese projects, and an M.A. programme on the Archaeology and Heritage of Asia, which places China in the wider context of other regions of Asia and is helping the development of the next generation of scholars focused on China and its neighbours. With the support of our Peking University colleagues we can now regard Chinese archaeology and heritage as very much part of the Institute’s global mission in archaeology.

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How to cite this article: Fuller, D Q and Pang, R 2015 The International Centre for Chinese Heritage and Archaeology (ICCHA): After a Decade of Success. *Archaeology International*, No. 18: pp. 33–36, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/ai.1806>

Published: 16 November 2015

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